"To me, you are the most hateful of the gods who hold Olympus. Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart. Long since, you have been dropped beneath the gods of the bright sky."
--Zeus to Ares
The Iliad
This is what the gods think of me.
An uncounted time ago, I stood on the heel of Mount Olympus. (Uncounted, for the times between man and god do not go hand in hand). It was the last assault of Hades, or Pluto, as he would later call himself.
Hades, Lord of Hell, brother of Zeus, had wanted Olympus for his own. To rule or trod under his feet, I know not. I know only that Zeus himself called for me.
How long had Hades pounded on the walls of the gods? I am uncertain. Only that a long and valiant battle had been fought and finally the gods had tired of it.
They needed to break the tide and so my name was called...
...Ares, god of war.
Come to me, attackers of Olympus, warriors of Hades, citizens of Hell! Come to me for I hunger for your slaughter!

HADES AND HIS HORDES HAD PLUNDERED THE LAND AROUND THE MOUNTAIN AND HELD ITS PEOPLE UNDER HIS HEEL.
HE HAD DECIMATED THE ROADS TO GET TO OLYMPUS, ONLY TO BE STUCK IN A BRUTAL STALEMATE OUTSIDE HER WALLS.
EVEN WITH HERCULES, THE STRONGEST OF THE GODS, APOLLO, POSEIDON AND MORTALS TRANSCENDENT SUCH AS ACHILLES AND AJAX, THE BALANCE COULD NOT BE THROWN.
AND WHEN ZEUS FIRST MUTTERED MY NAME, IT WAS HERCULES WHO HELD IT BACK. "NAY," HE SAID, "NAY TO THE NAME OF ARES, WHOSE NAME IS MORE THAN WAR."
"WHOSE NAME IS ABSENT OF HONOR, HUMILITY, PITY AND STRATEGY...
"...ALL THE THINGS NEEDED IN HONORABLE WAR."

ARES.
MY NAME ECHOES IN THE CRIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN, AND IS ETCHED WITH DENTS IN SWORDS.
ARES EVOKES NOT JUST THE POWER OF WAR, BUT SOMETHING MORE. THE WILL TO DO THE DEEDS THAT OTHERS CANNOT...
...THE RAPE OF NATIONS, THE GENOCIDE OF PEOPLE, TO REJOICE IN BLOOD AND PAIN.
I DO NOT CHOOSE A VICTOR; I SIMPLY ACT WHEN ONE SIDE IS WILLING TO DO ITS WORST.
TO UNLEASH THE BEAST OF WAR.
FOR ANNIHILATION IS THE ART OF ARES, AND THIS IS MY NAME.

HADES' ARMIES CRUSHED, MY POEM OF SLAUGHTER WAS COMPLETE. BUT THERE IS AN EPILOGUE.

THE BODIES OF HIS HELLISH ARMY WERE RETURNED, BUT NOT IN WHOLE.

THEY WERE CUT BIT FROM BIT, AND HALF OF THOSE PARTS WERE BURNED TO DUST AND MADE INTO BREAD FOR THE VICTORS TO FEAST ON.

THE OTHER HALF WAS TOSSED DOWN TO HELL, EACH MAN FOREVER SEARCHING FOR HIS OTHER PARTS, NEVER TO BE COMPLETE.

EACH MAN LOOKING FOR BITS OF HIMSELF HE WILL NEVER FIND.

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THIS IS HOW THEY WILL SPEND ETERNITY AND REMEMBER MY TOUCH.

LONG HAD IT BEEN SINCE I HAD SERVED WITH THE GODS OF LIGHT. ZEUS, MY FATHER AND HERA, MY MOTHER. THE PANTHEON, MY BLOOD.

I HAVE LONG BEEN SHUNNED BY THEM, YET YEARNED TO BE ONE OF THEM AGAIN.

I HAVE LASHED OUT AGAINST THE GODS IN MY DAY, BUT IT WAS OUT OF REJECTED LOVE, A LOSS OF RESPECT AMONGST THE OLYMPIANS.

PERHAPS NOW THAT I HAD SAVED THE CITY, I THOUGHT, THEY WOULD HAVE ME BACK.

NOW THAT THEY'D CALLED ON ME, I WAS CERTAIN IT WOULD FINALLY LEAD TO THEIR OPEN ARMS...

I WARNED YOU, FATHER--YES, ARES HAS WON THIS WAR FOR US--BUT AT WHAT PRICE?

THESE POOR SOULS OF PLUTO, MANY OF THEM STOLEN, WERE NOT GIVEN TO HIM IN SIN. LOOK WHAT HE HAS DONE TO THEM--TO LIVE IN A HALF STATE FOR ETERNITY--

YES, BUT WE FOUGHT THE VALIANT FIGHT AS WE COULD, TO A STALEMATE. NOT EVEN THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR, HERCULES, COULD END IT.

I'M SORRY, FATHER, WERE I A BETTER MAN, STRONGER--

WAR IS NOT WON ON MERE STRENGTH, SON, NOR EVEN HONOR, BUT OF THE WILL TO GO BEYOND YOURSELF, TO BECOME MORE THAN A WARRIOR, TO BECOME A FORCE... TO KILL WITHOUT HESITATION, TO SLAUGHTER WITHOUT PAUSE, TO SPILL THE BRAINS AND TASTE THE BLOOD OF YOUR ENEMY, TO LAY WASTE TO THEIR MEMORY...

... THIS IS WHAT ARES DOES, FOR HIS SOUL IS LOW. HAVE NO SHAME THAT YOU ARE MADE OF BETTER STOCK THAN HE!

YES, WE DID BECOME A FORCE, ZEUS, BUT A FORCE OF EVIL. TO FIGHT EVIL WITH EVIL! BAH! SUCH IS BENEATH THE GODS OF LIGHT!

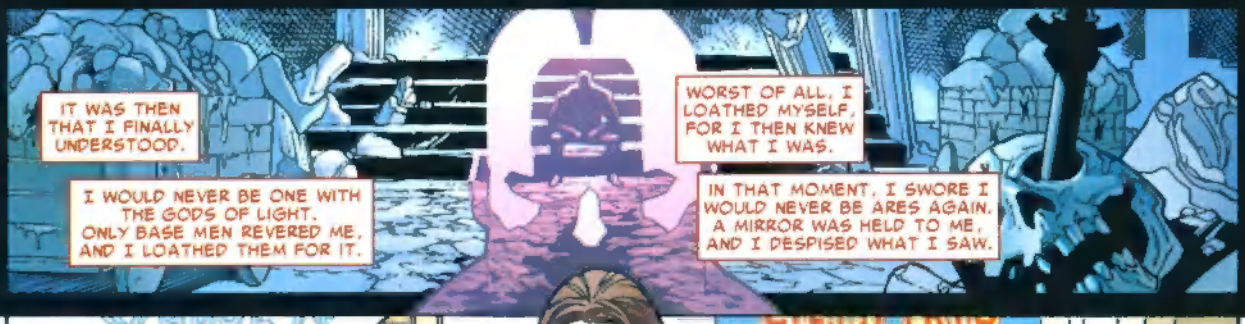
WE CALLED UPON THE DARKEST OF OUR BLOOD, ONE WHO WOULD SMITE WOMEN AND CHILDREN--BABIES--AS EASILY AS HE WOULD AN ENEMY!

HE IS BUT AN ANIMAL, A FROTHING DOG UNLEASHED BY OUR HANDS! NOW THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE BECOME--I KNOW NOT WHY I BORE HIM! BY KRONOS, HE IS FLESH OF OUR FLESH!

SAY NOT THAT NAME, WOMAN! I DID WHAT I MUST, I CALLED UPON THE WAYS OF ARES, NAY, NOT A GOD OF HONORABLE WAR BUT THE LORD OF DESTRUCTION AND ROUT.

"WE SHALL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH HIS FACE BUT FOR A TIME. FOR SOON ENOUGH, MEN WILL CALL UPON HIM AND HE WILL TURN FROM US AGAIN, AWAY FROM OUR SIGHT AND SMELLS.

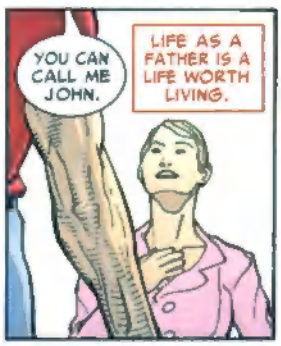
"LET US HOPE HE WILL BE FORGOTTEN AND SIMPLY FADE AWAY."

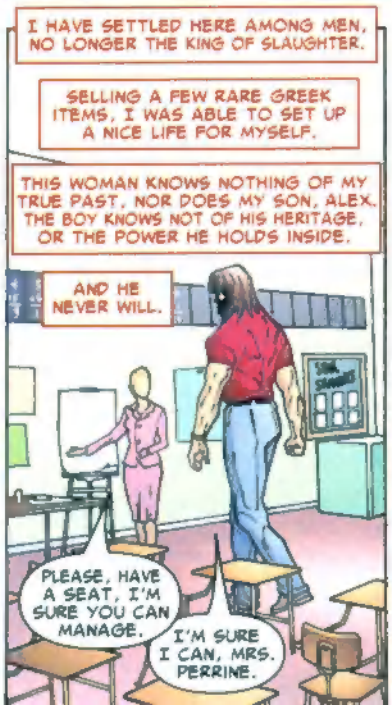

IT WAS THEN THAT I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD.
I WOULD NEVER BE ONE WITH THE GODS OF LIGHT. ONLY BASE MEN REVERED ME, AND I LOATHED THEM FOR IT.
WORST OF ALL, I LOATHED MYSELF, FOR I THEN KNEW WHAT I WAS.
IN THAT MOMENT, I SWORE I WOULD NEVER BE ARES AGAIN. A MIRROR WAS HELD TO ME, AND I DESPISED WHAT I SAW.

MANY YEARS LATER
I TURNED MY BACK ON THE GODS, WAR, AND ALL THINGS ARES, TO START OVER HERE ON EARTH AS A MORTAL MAN.
IT HAS BEEN YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW BLOOD OR WIELDED A WEAPON...
INSTEAD OF BATTLEFIELDS, I NOW CONTEND WITH SOCCER FIELDS, AND BATTLES ARE OVER BEDTIMES AND VIDEO GAMES.
MARCH 16th
PERMISSION SLIPS DUE
MARCH 8th

MR. AARON, THANK YOU FOR COMING TO THE PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE. I'M MRS. PERRINE.

IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.

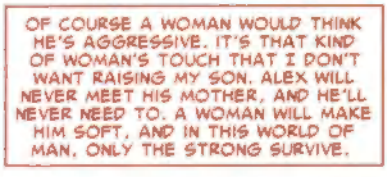

YOU CAN CALL ME JOHN.
LIFE AS A FATHER IS A LIFE WORTH LIVING.


I HAVE SETTLED HERE AMONG MEN, NO LONGER THE KING OF SLAUGHTER.
SELLING A FEW RARE GREEK ITEMS, I WAS ABLE TO SET UP A NICE LIFE FOR MYSELF.
THIS WOMAN KNOWS NOTHING OF MY TRUE PAST, NOR DOES MY SON, ALEX. THE BOY KNOWS NOT OF HIS HERITAGE, OR THE POWER HE HOLDS INSIDE.
AND HE NEVER WILL.
PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT, I'M SURE YOU CAN MANAGE.
I'M SURE I CAN, MRS. PERRINE.

SHE TELLS ME THINGS I ALREADY KNOW ABOUT ALEX. HE'S THE BEST STUDENT IN THE THIRD GRADE, BUT HE'S A BIT AGGRESSIVE.

Karate
Alex

I TELL HER HE'S NOT AGGRESSIVE, HE SIMPLY STANDS HIS GROUND. HE'S NOT WEAK.

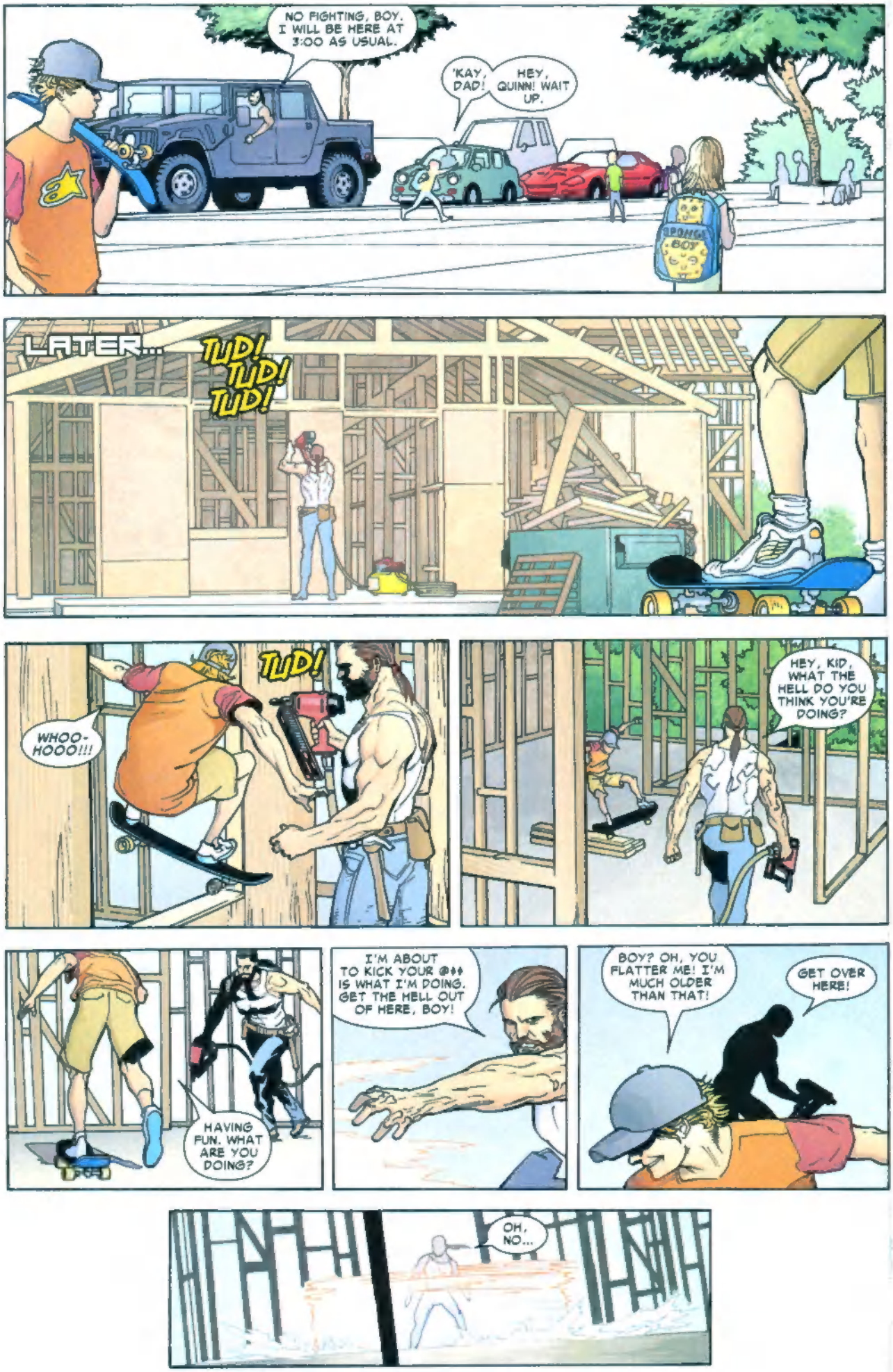

OF COURSE A WOMAN WOULD THINK HE'S AGGRESSIVE. IT'S THAT KIND OF WOMAN'S TOUCH THAT I DON'T WANT RAISING MY SON. ALEX WILL NEVER MEET HIS MOTHER, AND HE'LL NEVER NEED TO. A WOMAN WILL MAKE HIM SOFT, AND IN THIS WORLD OF MAN, ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE.

EVEN IN THE THIRD GRADE.

S. LIEBERMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
REPORT CARDS MARTH
PTA MEETING 17-21
THUNK!
ALEX! LET'S GO, BOY.
SEE YOU, QUINN, GOTTA SPLIT.
PEACE OUT, YO.
PEACE OUT!
WHAT'S THAT ABOUT "PEACE OUT"?
YOU'RE SO OLD, DAD.
I FEEL OLDER THAN I LOOK, BOY. YOU WEAR ME OUT.
COME ON, I'LL RACE YOU TO THE CAR!
I DON'T KNOW, MY BACK'S KINDA--
HEY!

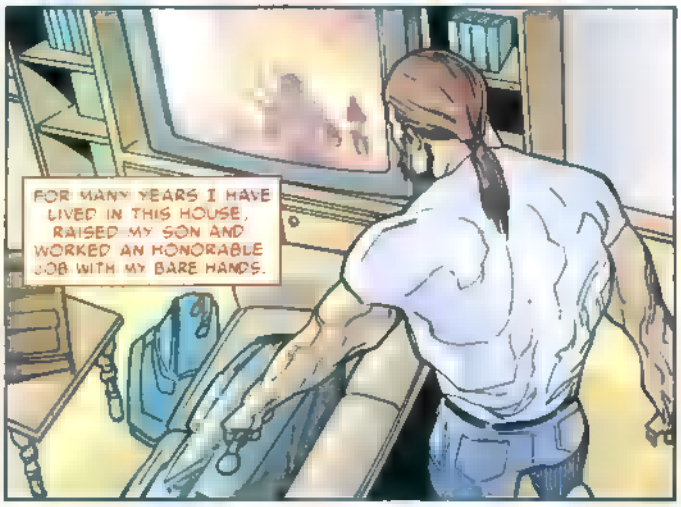
ALEX, ARE YOU ALMOST FINISHED?
ALMOST, DAD. NUMBER 20.
--TODAY LAUNCHED OPERATION THUNDERBOLT TO QUELL A MONTH-LONG INSURGENCY IN THE SOUTH...
...WHILE MULTIPLE SUICIDE BOMBERS KILL AT LEAST 57 IN A BAGHDAD MARKETPLACE, BRINGING--
KLICK!
I THINK BETTER WITH NOISE.
WE COULD DO WITHOUT THAT NOISE. YOU THINK BETTER WHEN MEN ARE KILLING AND DYING?
WHAT?
NOTHING. MRS. PERRINE TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR FIGHTING AT SCHOOL AGAIN.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT FIGHTING?
IF I'M FIGHTING MORE THAN ONE GUY, HIT THE BIG ONE FIRST, IN THE NOSE.
THE BLOOD WILL SCARE THE OTHER GUYS OFF, OR AT LEAST LONG ENOUGH TO PALM ONE IN THE EAR, POP THE DRUM, AND HE'LL FALL LIKE A BRICK.
THAT'S MY BOY.
BUT THAT'S NOT ALL...

I CAN ALSO FINGER-LOCK THEM-- LIKE THIS!
POW!
AH!
JUST REMEMBER, YOU CAN GET OUT OF ANY HOLD...
...IF YOU DON'T GIVE UP...
AAGGH!!
SEE? NOW, TELL ME YOU GIVE.
NO!
I KNOW THIS HURTS, BOY...GIVE!
NO! FORGET IT!
GOOD JOB, ALEX. SHAKE IT OFF. NEVER GIVE UP.
YOU'RE LUCKY! I WAS JUST ABOUT TO BREAK OUT AND BODY SLAM YOU!
GOOD FOR THE NEIGHBORS YOU DIDN'T.


NO FIGHTING, BOY. I WILL BE HERE AT 3:00 AS USUAL.
'KAY, DAD!
HEY, QUINN! WAIT UP.
SPONGE BOY
LATER...
TUD! TUD! TUD!
WHOO-HOOO!!!
TUD!
HEY, KID, WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
HAVING FUN. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M ABOUT TO KICK YOUR @#♦ IS WHAT I'M DOING. GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE, BOY!
BOY? OH, YOU FLATTER ME! I'M MUCH OLDER THAN THAT!
GET OVER HERE!
OH, NO...

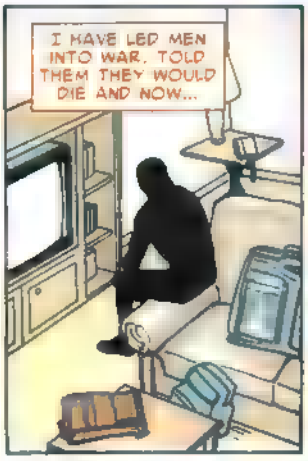
WHAT, YOU DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME? I THOUGHT I'D SETTLE ON EARTH LIKE YOU, START OVER. BUT AS SOMETHING FUN, NOT LIKE A STUPID CARPENTER.
HERMES.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WAR.
THE GODS ARE CALLING YOU, ARES, AND YOU MUST ANSWER.
ASGARD HAS FALLEN AND THE ENEMIES OF OLYMPUS HAVE SEEN THIS AS A TIME OF WEAKNESS.
I CARE NOT FOR OLYMPUS OR ITS ENEMIES. WHAT'S THEIRS IS THEIRS. LEAVE THIS PLACE BEFORE I SPILL YOUR BLOOD.
OH, I SEE THE GOD OF WAR IS NOT QUITE AS RETIRED AS RUMOR SAYS, IS HE?
TUD! TUD! TUD!
AAAAHH!
AAH!
IN SOME CULTURES, IT IS CUSTOM TO KILL THE MESSENGER!

AHH--
ACK!!
I WILL NOT HEED THE CALL OF THE GODS AGAIN! THAT IS ALL BEHIND ME NOW.
TAKE THIS MESSAGE BACK TO ZEUS--
IF THE GODS WANT TO SEE ARES AWAKEN, THEY DO SO AT THEIR OWN DOOM!
HE WILL AWAKEN AGAIN ONLY TO SHAKE THE HALLS OF OLYMPUS WITH HIS OWN FISTS AND PAINT IT WITH THE BLOOD OF THE OLYMPIANS!!
IF THEY WANT ARES, ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS CALL ON ME AGAIN, AND WAR WILL BE UPON THEM!
NOW GO! AND NEVER RETURN, NOT IN FLESH OR WORDS!
AGH!
TROOSH!


FOR MANY YEARS I HAVE LIVED IN THIS HOUSE, RAISED MY SON AND WORKED AN HONORABLE JOB WITH MY BARE HANDS.

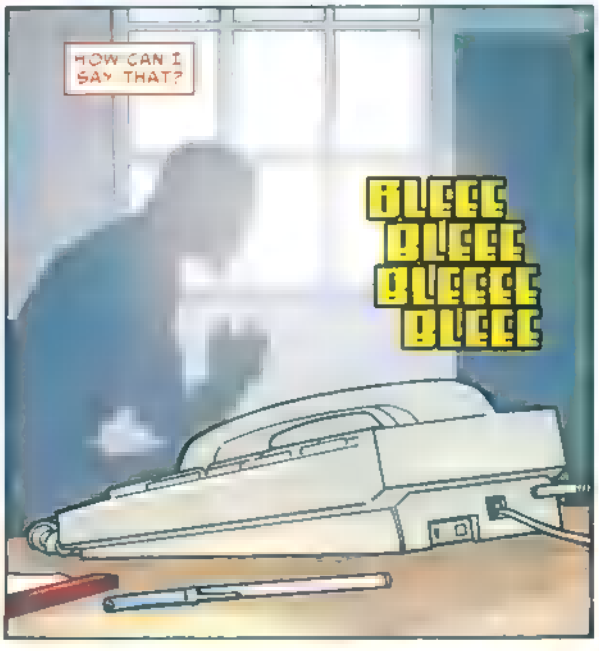
THIS LIFE IS DEAD TO US NOW. WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE ON WITHOUT A TRACE.

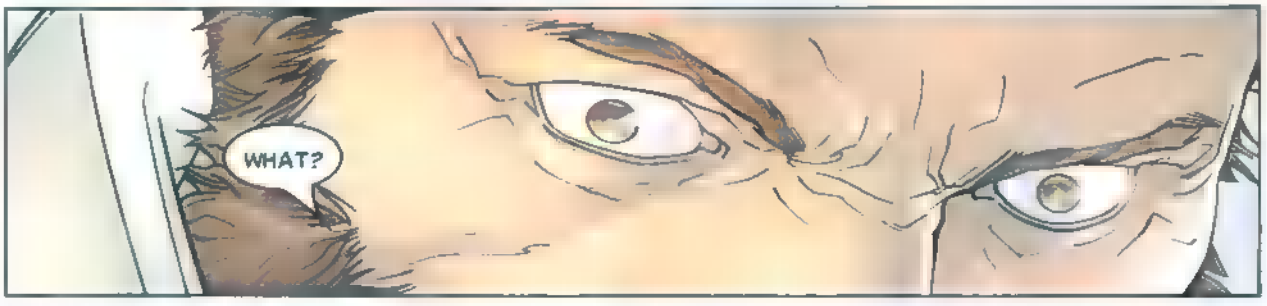
HOW WILL I EXPLAIN THIS TO ALEX?

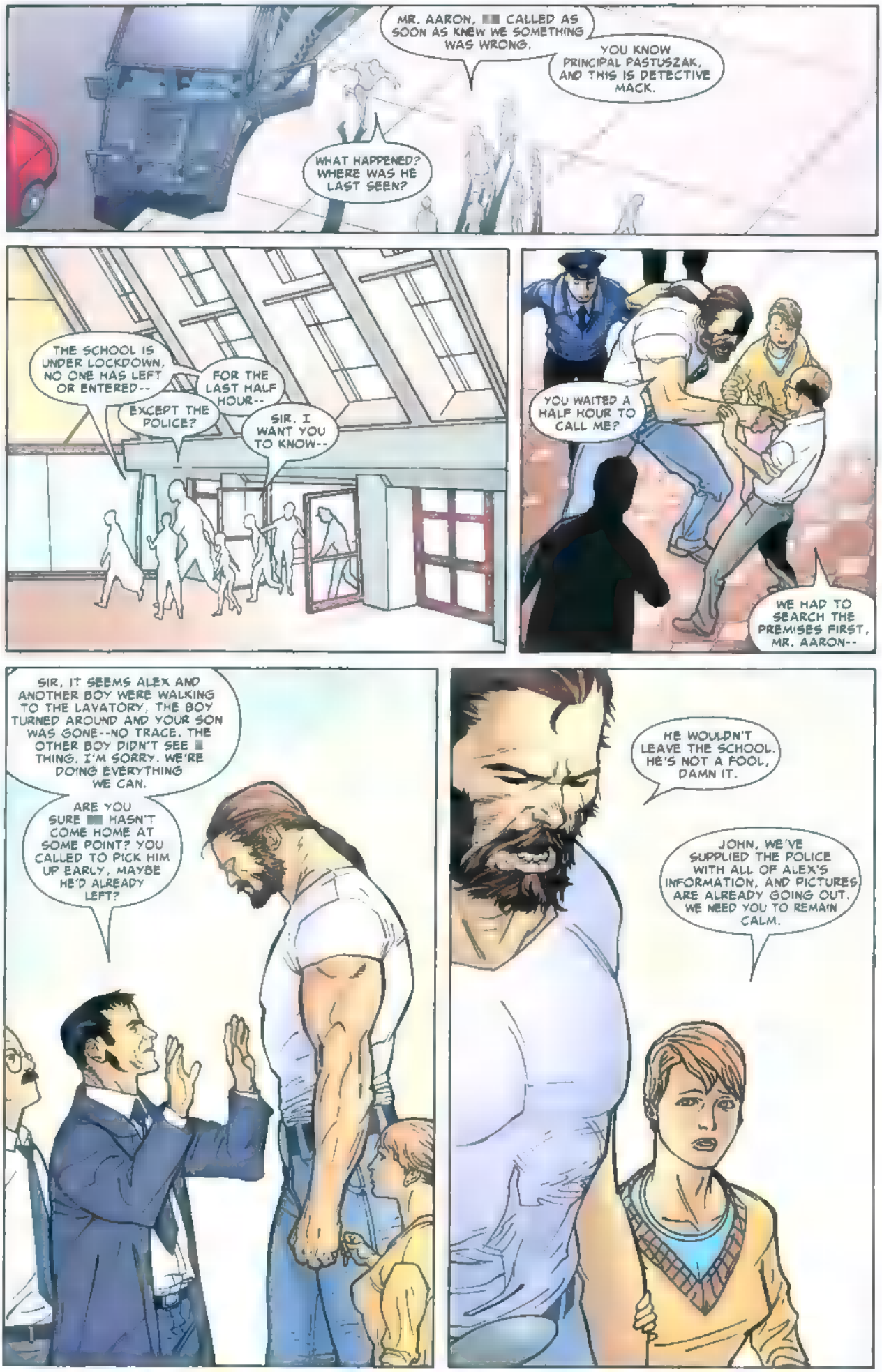

I HAVE LED MEN INTO WAR. TOLD THEM THEY WOULD DIE AND NOW...

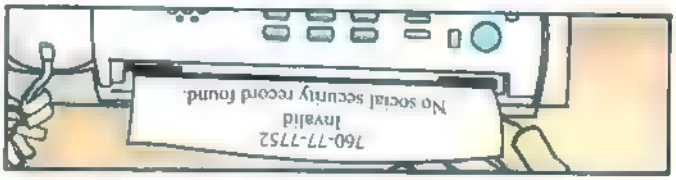
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO MY OWN SON.

"YOUR FATHER--YOUR LIFE--IS A LIE? IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THOUGHT IT WAS?"
"I'M NOT WHO YOU THOUGHT I AM?"
BLEEE BLEEE BLEEEE BLEEE


HOW CAN I SAY THAT?
BLEEE BLEEE BLEEEE BLEEE


WHAT?


MR. AARON, [redacted] CALLED AS SOON AS KNEW WE SOMETHING WAS WRONG.
YOU KNOW PRINCIPAL PASTUSZAK, AND THIS IS DETECTIVE MACK.
WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE WAS HE LAST SEEN?
THE SCHOOL IS UNDER LOCKDOWN, NO ONE HAS LEFT OR ENTERED--
FOR THE LAST HALF HOUR--
EXCEPT THE POLICE?
SIR, I WANT YOU TO KNOW--
YOU WAITED A HALF HOUR TO CALL ME?
WE HAD TO SEARCH THE PREMISES FIRST, MR. AARON--
SIR, IT SEEMS ALEX AND ANOTHER BOY WERE WALKING TO THE LAVATORY, THE BOY TURNED AROUND AND YOUR SON WAS GONE--NO TRACE. THE OTHER BOY DIDN'T SEE [redacted] THING. I'M SORRY. WE'RE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN.
ARE YOU SURE [redacted] HASN'T COME HOME AT SOME POINT? YOU CALLED TO PICK HIM UP EARLY, MAYBE HE'D ALREADY LEFT?
HE WOULDN'T LEAVE THE SCHOOL. HE'S NOT A FOOL, DAMN IT.
JOHN, WE'VE SUPPLIED THE POLICE WITH ALL OF ALEX'S INFORMATION, AND PICTURES ARE ALREADY GOING OUT. WE NEED YOU TO REMAIN CALM.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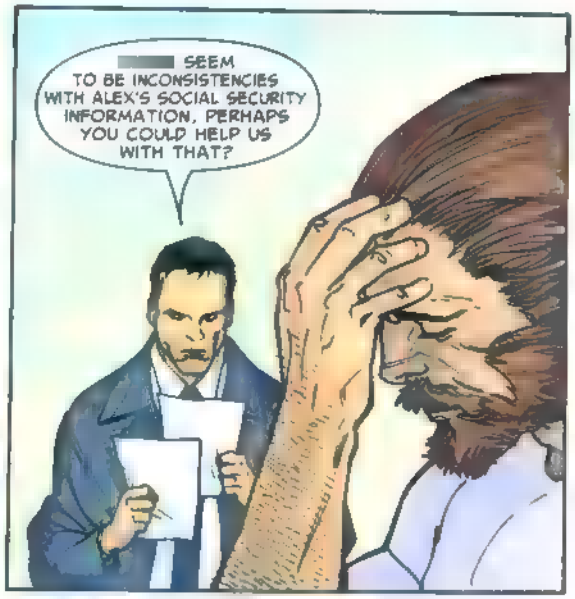
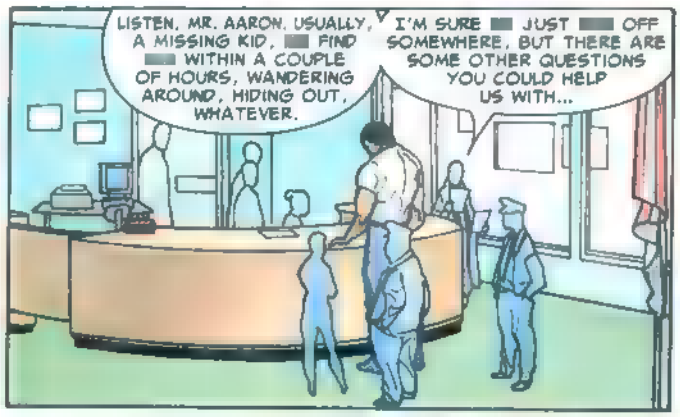
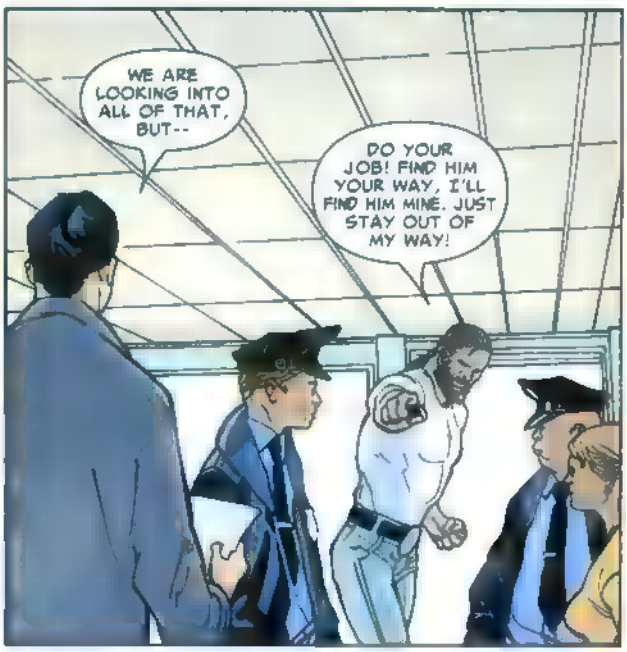
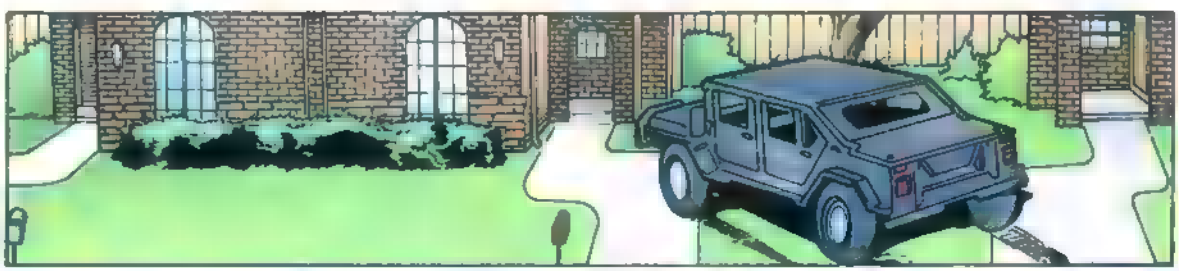

[redacted] SEEM TO BE INCONSISTENCIES WITH ALEX'S SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION. PERHAPS YOU COULD HELP US WITH THAT?

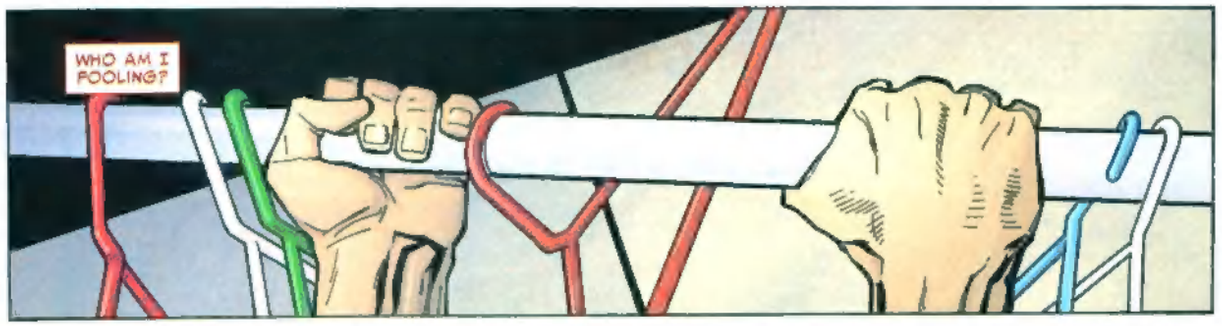

LISTEN, MR. AARON. USUALLY, A MISSING KID, [redacted] FIND [redacted] WITHIN A COUPLE OF HOURS, WANDERING AROUND, HIDING OUT, WHATEVER.
I'M SURE [redacted] JUST [redacted] OFF SOMEWHERE, BUT THERE ARE SOME OTHER QUESTIONS YOU COULD HELP US WITH...

HIS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER?
YES, HIS SOCIAL--
HOW THE HELL IS THAT GOING TO GET MY SON BACK? WHY ARE YOU STANDING HERE NOT LOOKING FOR HIM?
DID ANYONE SEE A STRANGER IN THE BUILDING? WHAT ABOUT THE SECURITY CAMERAS?

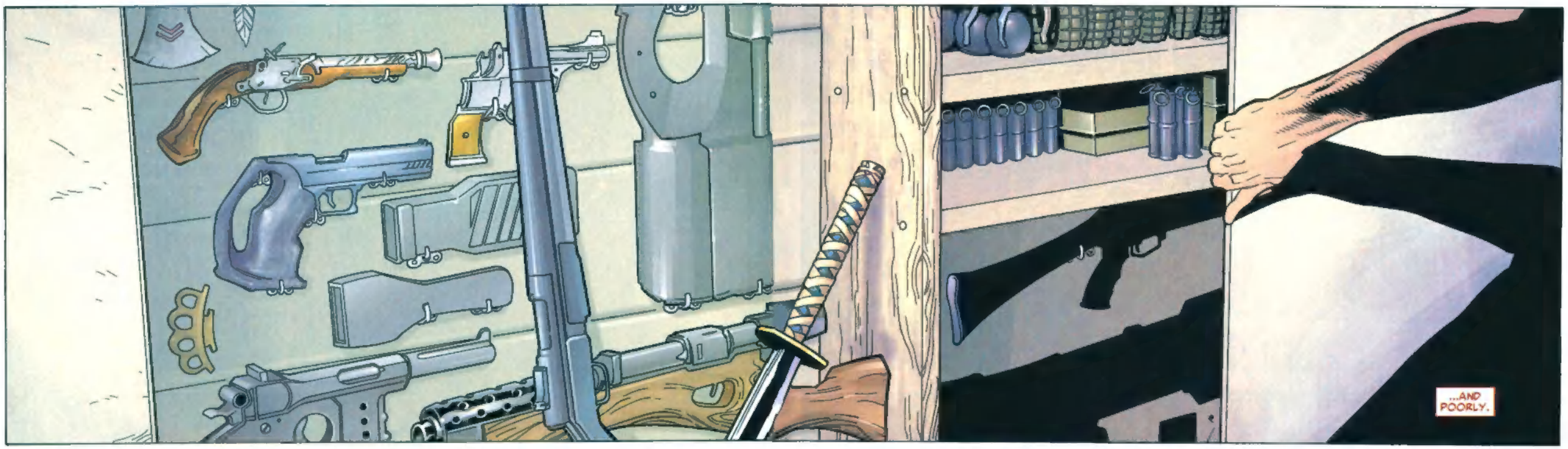

WE ARE LOOKING INTO ALL OF THAT, BUT--
DO YOUR JOB! FIND HIM YOUR WAY, I'LL FIND HIM MINE. JUST STAY OUT OF MY WAY!

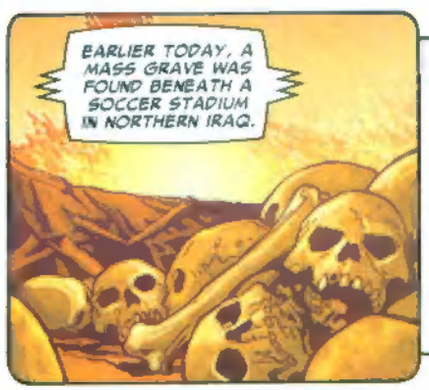
JOHN, PLEASE...
IT'S OKAY, MRS. PERRINE... IT'S BEST IF HE WAITS FOR ALEX AT HOME ANYWAY...




WHO AM I FOOLING?

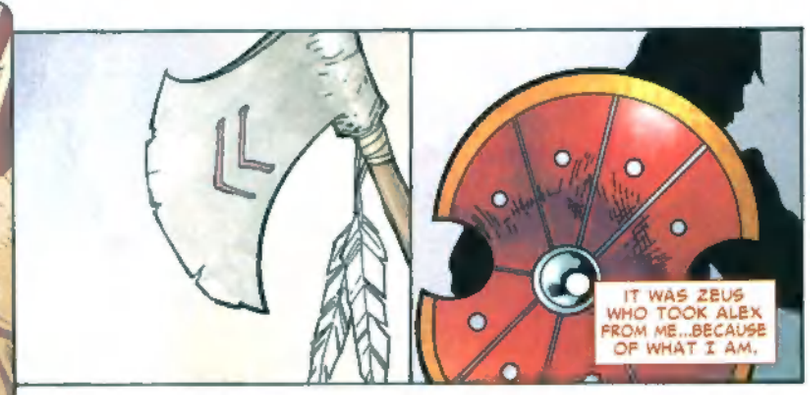
ARES, GOD OF WAR, RETIRED. I'M A FOOL.
I CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM WHAT I AM. I WAS JUST LYING TO MYSELF...

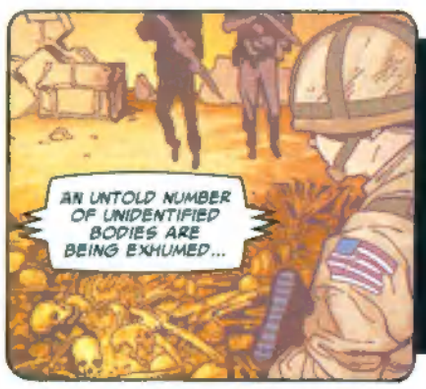

...AND POORLY.


EARLIER TODAY, A MASS GRAVE WAS FOUND BENEATH A SOCCER STADIUM IN NORTHERN IRAQ.

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE GOD OF WAR, BE IT AS ARES OR AARON.

AN EXECUTION ROOM WAS FOUND WALLED UP IN THE GARAGE.


IT WAS ZEUS WHO TOOK ALEX FROM ME...BECAUSE OF WHAT I AM.


AN UNTOLD NUMBER OF UNIDENTIFIED BODIES ARE BEING EXHUMED...

THIS IS WHO I AM.

..NO I.D. ON THESE GUYS, OR WHY THEY WERE KILLED...

HE THOUGHT IT WOULD ANGER ME, AWAKEN THE GOD OF WAR.
HE WAS RIGHT.

DETECTIVE, REALLY, SHOULD WE BE BOTHERING HIM WITH THESE QUESTIONS NOW?
NOT ONLY IS HIS BOY'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER FALSE, SO IS HIS.
HE AND THE BOY HAVE NO HISTORY, NO FAMILY, NO PAST. I'M NOT EVEN SURE THE BOY IS HIS.
POMADE
ANGER AND PANIC HAVE CLOUDED MY MIND. I WASN'T THINKING CLEARLY...
CLCH
BZZZZZZZZ
HE'S NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS.
I DON'T LIKE THIS. COME ON.
417
I KNOW WHERE ALEX IS NOW. BUT I'LL HAVE TO SHOW THE GODS THE FACE OF ARES TO GET HIM BACK.
BZZZZZZZZ
SEE ANYONE?
417
BZZZZZZZZ
I WILL GO TO FACE THE GODS...

--SO YOU'D BETTER STAY THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY!
AREA 51: GOD OF WAR
PART I OF V
MIKE DEMING
WRITER
TRAVEL FOREMAN
PENCILER
DEREK FRIDOLFS
INKER
LEN O'GRADY
COLORS
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